2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
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Assimilated lineages, therefore, all over Taleland, though thoroughly absorbed into the structure of the sub-clan or clan, suffer the same disabilities as the more precisely differentiated attached lineages; they cannot, however, make a virtue of this, as the latter sometimes can; they cannot explain away their status. To tax a person, openly or explicitly, with being the descendant of a slave (*da'abər bii*) is one of the deadliest insults, however remote his slave ancestry may be. This is more than a matter of etiquette. It amounts, in certain circumstances, to blasphemy against the spirit of the man who originally adopted this slave ancestor. Thus, under this rule of courtesy to clansmen and respect for ancestors, the status of an assimilated lineage is never commented on publicly unless a serious issue hangs on it or a severe quarrel is involved. This exceptional circumspection about assimilated lineages shows better than anything else their ambiguous position in the clan.

Such elements of the social structure as these are not apparent at first glance. I did not discover the existence of assimilated lineages at Tongo until the end of my first year in the field. To do so it was essential to have a very thorough understanding of the way the lineage system works and of the internal structure of the Tale community. I was able then to notice and to be puzzled by the absence, or self-effacement, of certain people in situations where they would normally be representing their lineage segments. It was not the behaviour to be expected of them if their segments were of equal status with the authentic segments of Mosuor biis. Veiled hints began to have a meaning which confidential informants confirmed.

One of my earliest friends and frankest informants at Tongo was Sayəbazaa, an elder in whom the chief had the greatest confidence and who was universally esteemed for his industry and probity. Sayəbazaa was the head (*kpeem*) of Nəŋsuur yidɛm, a major segment of one of the major segments of Tongo. One of its members held an important and confidential office under the chief. Nəŋsuur yidɛm appeared to be of the true agnatic line of Mosuor. I took this for granted the more readily because, when the Great Festival season came round and all the elders of Tongo were summoned to the chief's house so that a diviner could be consulted, it was Sayəbazaa who consulted the diviner on behalf of the chief and the whole of Tongo, in order to ascertain what offerings must be given to Mosuor and the chiefly ancestors.

Nevertheless, Nəŋsuur yidɛm is an assimilated lineage whose founding ancestor is vaguely said to have arrived with Mosuor. Though almost completely absorbed by the authentic line of Mosuor biis, a last barrier remains, which I discovered only through one of the most striking of the events which revealed the existence and status of accessory lineages at Tongo. It showed also how there is a continuous process of adjustment going on in every sector of the social structure, resolving the tensions and contradictions latent in it.

It was an occasion of historic importance marking the climax of one phase in the absorption of the accessory lineages by the authentic lineages of Tongo. The occasion was that of the great thanksgiving sacrifice to the founding ancestors of Tongo, Mosuor and his son Sɛyahəg, which took place in 1936. Beef and animals were contributed by the chief, who gave

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or adolescent son. The *da'aŋ* and *da'aŋboog* also serve as a sort of drawing-room. A guest who must be treated with respect is invited to step round to the kitchen to have his meal there in private, a suitor is told to go round to the girl's mother's kitchen to plead his suit with her.

The *da'aŋ* and *da'aŋboog* are the counterpart in the social sphere of a woman of the *zɔŋ*, cattle yard (*sapak*), and granary (*buur*) in that of a man. They mark off the economic field reserved for her and the social sphere in which she is supreme. Etiquette and convention show this, and, as in the case of the *zɔŋ* and the *buur*, ritual notions give expression to it and put the seal of mystical value on it. Women do not have ancestor shrines of their own. But in her storeroom an old woman keeps her *zaalɔŋ*. This is a long rope net, holding a neat pile of polished calabash dishes (*ŋman*) of all sizes which she has accumulated during her married life. One of these is her *kumpiog*, 'basket of death'. It is the symbol of her mortal existence.[1] When she dies it stands in her *dɛndɔŋo* and is eventually taken, with the most meticulous ceremonial care, to her eldest surviving daughter. In this room also she keeps her main storage pot (*dɔk*). It is to her what a man's granary is to him. One sign of this is the rule that her first-born daughter may never, in the mother's lifetime, open it. She does so ritually when her mother's funeral is completed.[2]

Lastly, there is the grinding-room (*neer*), a vastly important item in the organization of the domestic economy, and in the personal relations of the women of a family with one another. It is always a small, low room, 3 or 4 feet in diameter, with a doorway barely large enough to admit a person on hands and knees. A hole under the eaves, the size of a soup plate, lets in a glimmer of light. A waist-high table built of mud, in the hollow surface of which two nether grindstones are embedded, takes up most of the interior. In a small homestead like Ɔndieso's one *neer* is enough, and his mother and wife share it, though the older woman seldom has occasion to use it as her daughter-in-law does most of the cooking for the family. If there are several women in a household, more than one grinding-room is needed. One reason for this is purely mechanical. Grinding the grain for the main meal, in the evening, takes at least an hour, in the period of plenty. The women and girls do this at any time of the day, but prefer to do it in the afternoon. Thus more than one woman may want to use the *neer* at the same time. But there is another reason as well. Co-wives are apt to squabble over the use of the grinding-room, especially if they do not get on harmoni-

[1] The calabash is the commonest domestic utensil and it symbolizes a woman in many contexts. For instance, when a man's wife bears a child he will send to tell her parents; and the messenger reports, with the euphemism the Tallensi always resort to on such occasions, that the woman has born 'a calabash' (*ŋman*) if it is a girl, or a 'staff' (*duor*) if it is a boy—the staff being a hunting-weapon carried by men.

[2] Cf. Ch. VIII below.

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602 interests and solidarity. This applies to women as well, if in a slightly lesser degree. Moreover, close cognates of different clans keep in touch sufficiently to know a great deal about one another's personal life.

592 In spite of this, domestic privacy is well guarded, for the essential life of the family goes on inside the homestead. There is a basis for this 262 in the rules of residence and in the domestic economy. Residential •576 autonomy is an index of economic autonomy. A household produces almost the whole of the food-supplies it consumes. Its neighbours, however closely related they are, can guess as to the sufficiency but cannot know the exact quantity of a household's food-supplies. Only the head of the household knows this. As we have seen, a major factor of differentiation between and within domestic units is the organization of food production and consumption. One can see this any evening when the chief meal of the day is eaten. It is prepared by the women and consumed by all the members of the household producing the grain. Meals are not regularly shared between separate households, even within the same domestic unit. The correct thing is for a person to take his usual meals at home amidst his own family. Most Tallensi would starve rather than deliberately scrounge (*bimh*) a meal off a kinsman who farms separately, even if the latter lives in the same homestead. Tallensi would think it a disgrace if their children made a habit of going to feed with neighbours, as is the custom in some primitive societies. A hungry child comes to its mother for food; it will not go to a neighbouring homestead in the hope of getting something to eat.

576 The etiquette of social intercourse indicates as clearly the degree to which domestic privacy is taken for granted. A visitor always announces 574 himself at the gateway. A kinsman, neighbour, or friend calls out, 521 informally, the name of the person he wishes to see, a stranger calls out *gafarra* ('excuse me'), and waits to be asked in. At night the family is usually gathered together inside its own homestead. In fine weather, especially if the moon is bright, men, women, and children spread themselves out in the senior woman's *dendɔŋo*, relaxing after the evening meal. If it is a large family a visitor will find them sprawling at ease in what seems a completely higgledy-piggledy huddle. The infants sleep in their mothers' arms, the smaller children doze on the hard gravel floor, the older children chatter in twos and threes, the grown-ups and the young men and girls talk of the day's happenings, yarn and gossip, or play at riddles. Generally, several different conversations go on at the same time. There may be visitors, a neighbour come on some business or suitors come courting one of the girls. A visitor can be seen in entire privacy. He or she is taken into one of the rooms, and no one would be so lacking in manners as to intrude. A young man visits his sweetheart [584] thus in her own home, and is entertained by her in complete privacy. Other members of the family know all about it, of course, but the sweethearts need not fear being disturbed.

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Within the joint family, though its members maintain a very intimate association with one another, make free of one anothers' possessions, and go freely in and out of every woman's quarters, each woman and her children are ensured a certain amount of privacy in their own *dug*. Husband and wife form a precisely distinguished unit. They have complete privacy in their sexual relations and a great deal of privacy in other relations. It would be the grossest breach of manners for anyone but their own infant child to intrude on a man and his wife in their own sleeping-room.

In their own home, therefore, a family has much privacy. A man can confide in his wife or his son things that he does not want others to know about—things about his debts, his property, or his ritual possessions. He can talk over with them problems concerning the household or matters of public import. There are ritual activities, such as sacrifices to a medicine shrine, in which only a man and his sons or the members of the joint family share. Sometimes such domestic secrets have to be divulged, especially after a man's death. It may be necessary to clear up a question of a debt he owed or to carry out special rites for one of his medicine shrines. But until then they are usually faithfully guarded. The Talǝŋa can keep his own counsel if need be.

The Significance of Marriage[1]

As the preceding chapters suggest, Tale domestic relations do not remain perpetually fixed. They change and develop with the years. At one time the ties of economic co-operation, of reciprocal sentiment and mutual loyalties, of reciprocal and shared rights and duties, are uppermost; at another the underlying cleavages and competing interests push through. This appears very clearly in the relations of husband and wife, the central pillar of the domestic organization. We shall discuss the marital relationship in some detail, for it is a nodal relationship in Tale social life. It is not only the starting-point of the family, but the starting-point of the kinship ties that run across and between genealogically independent clans and lineages. Through marriage the mutually exclusive corporate units of Tale society become interlaced with one another.

The Tallensi regard marriage as the normal state of life for every adult. They cannot conceive of anyone voluntarily refraining from marriage throughout life. There is something wrong, by native standards, with men and women who never marry; and they are few. In the whole of Tongo I knew only five men who had never been married and who would, according to common belief, never marry. One was obviously mentally defective; another was an invert; two were said to be so ugly that no woman would accept them, but both were also definitely unbalanced and eccentric; and the last was a gentle old man, who, it was

[1] A preliminary account of Tale marriage customs is given in my pamphlet, *Marriage Law among the Tallensi*, Government Press, Gold Coast, 1935.

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be a grievous sin against her parents and her ancestors, sure to bring misfortune on her and her children.

I was the unsuspecting witness of the strength of a woman's filial devotion, brought out by the crisis of death, at Sawɔŋba's burial ceremony. Sawɔŋba's daughter married a Tɛnzugu man against her father's wish. To add insult to injury, when Sawɔŋba sent messengers to demand a cow of the bride-price, his son-in-law turned them away with contempt. As the girl refused to leave her husband, Sawɔŋba cursed her, and, being a leper who knew he had not long to live, expressly forbade her to come to his funeral. She was not told of his death, but heard of it indirectly. On the day of the burial, during one of the major rites, there was a sudden commotion in the crowd around the gateway. A young woman dashed forward, making for the homestead. I could see the strained and agitated look on her face as she passed me. But at once one of Sawɔŋba's classificatory sons darted forward, seized her, and dragged her back to the tree where the elders sat. For a minute or two nothing but a wildly shouting mob could be seen under the tree. Then the girl struggled out, sobbing aloud, her body covered with bruises where she had been beaten by her enraged brothers and clansmen. Followed by execrations, she was escorted by one of the elders to where her husband and a party of his lineage kin were waiting. Only the fear of bloodshed, which would make the affair into that much-dreaded thing, a 'case for the white man (*nasaara yɛl*)', had restrained them from interfering. Sawɔŋba's sons and lineage kin did not see the pathos of their sister's action. They were thoroughly incensed, and called it an insult. Had her husband wished to behave properly, he would have sent an elder of his lineage to beg Sawɔŋba's pardon while he was still alive, or, at any rate, to beg the head of Sawɔŋba's medial lineage to intercede with his sons when he heard of Sawɔŋba's death.

These bonds of a woman with her parental family play an important part in Tale domestic economy. After the harvest there is always a great coming and going of daughters to and from their parental homes. And no man would let his daughter or sister depart, at this time, without a gift of a well-filled basket of grain. This is one way in which a woman builds up her own private resources out of which she provides little luxuries, utensils, and clothes for herself and by means of which she often tides the family over a lean period. This is a privilege, but it has almost the force of a right. Occasionally an elderly woman without a son, or, as sometimes happens nowadays, with her only son away for long in Ashanti or the Colony, is left without proper support in her husband's home. She can then go back to her father's home and is entitled to her sustenance as of right. The services a woman's husband renders to her father, now and then, in the early years of marriage, the interest she has in her brother's children, the importance attached to

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578 come to demand a runaway daughter and her would-be husband's
602 lineage elders. The young man will hide the girl with friends, or use
627 other stratagems to keep her, backed up for the time being, and chiefly for form's sake, by his lineage elders. But later he may have a struggle with the head of his nuclear lineage if he is opposed to the marriage. It is not until the formal placation gift (*sɛndaan*) is sent to the girl's father with his consent and that of his lineage elders, that a truce comes, and not until the first instalment of the bride-price is paid that a promise of peace appears—which may not be for months, or even for a couple of years.

675 The placation gift and the bride-price provide an objective instrument
583 by means of which the two lineage segments which are the parties to a marriage can balance their divergent interests in and opposing rights over the woman. It is the instrument that separates the woman from her natal family—or rather, it separates her role as wife from her role as daughter, her subordination to her husband from her subjection to her father, so that the conflict between these roles is kept in check.

583 That is the meaning of the rule I once heard summed up in the
● 576 maxim: 'A woman must not be at her father's house when they (her husband's people) send the placation gifts. That is a taboo.' The young man who said this was protesting at the breach of this rule forced upon him by the unscrupulous action of one of the leading elders of his clan. The rule applies both to the placation gift and to the bride-price.

574 A newly wed wife, therefore, often finds herself torn between her
593 desire to be with her husband and her loyalty and sense of duty to her parents, enhanced as this is by her respect for parental authority. Tallensi realize that she must be weaned from her attachment to her parents. Thus for the first month or two of marriage a young wife is not allowed to visit her parents, lest, as the natives say, her longing for her mother should get the better of her and she should refuse to return to her husband. Even after some years of marriage men object to young wives paying prolonged visits to their parents without good cause, as we have seen. I have often been amused at the mood of bristling suspicion which comes over a man left a grass-widower for a week or two, though he has probably consented to his wife's going on a visit and may have other wives at home. It must be admitted, however, that wives [837] run off with other men often enough after such visits to give grounds for the taunt of innate frivolity and fickleness that men throw up against the whole of the opposite sex. A woman in her father's house assumes, for the time being, the social personality of a daughter; and it is as if she is prone, then, to doff her wifehood and with it her sense of duty to her husband. Tallensi say that, if a man falls out with his father-in-law, his wife will take her husband's part when she is with him, but will side with her father at her parental home. Only after several years of marriage, with children pledging her to marital fidelity and an established relationship binding her to her husband, is she most likely to

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solve the conflict between these antithetic bonds in favour of her conjugal family.

Tallensi say that a woman is like a stranger or guest (both ideas are contained in the native word *saan*) in her husband's house during the first year or two of marriage. Standing outside the intimate life and vital concerns of the family, she cannot yet be relied upon. Gradually she grows accustomed (*malǝm*) to her conjugal family; and after some years, when she has several children, she becomes so far absorbed into the family that full trust can be reposed in her and she takes a full and self-confident part in family affairs.

It needs little observation to see how apt is this description of the gradual absorption of women into their husbands' families. On a visit to a homestead to which a newly wedded wife has just been added, one can easily observe the 'shyness (*valǝm*)', as the Tallensi call it, of the new wife (*pɔya*) and her husband (*sɛt*) towards each other. This goes farther than formal etiquette. Good manners require that a woman should always show respect to her husband in public. She walks behind him if they have to go anywhere together on a ceremonial occasion. She stoops or kneels whenever she offers him food or drink. But this behaviour is customary for a woman with all adult males other than her own children. It is a sign of the general attitude of respect due from women to men in a society so dominated in public social relations by the patriarchal principle. The 'shyness' of a newly married wife comes out in other ways. She tries to keep out of her husband's way as much as possible during the day, busying herself zealously with the household tasks given to her by her mother-in-law. She is submissive to all his requests. She speaks to him only when she is spoken to. She takes no initiative in anything.

This attitude is even more marked in her behaviour towards her parents-in-law (*dayaam*, pl. *dayaanam*), to whom she is bound to show formal deference at all times, and to her adult brothers-in-law, with whom she must always be circumspect because of the incest barrier which we shall discuss later. It often comes into her private relations with her husband if he is much older than she is. She will flirt and be more companionable with a young husband, in private, natives say; for he is probably like herself a *tarǝm*, junior, under authority, and connubial joys mean so much to him that he comes down to an equal footing with his wife for their sake.

The Relationships of a Wife with her Relatives-in-law

A woman does not avoid any of her relatives-in-law or her husband, nor are her relations with them regulated by strict prescription. She maintains a general attitude of deference, modesty, and complaisance towards them. A well-behaved young wife is industrious and obedient in helping her mother-in-law with her domestic work, and she will be self-effacing and deferential towards her father-in-law, her husband,

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606 and his adult brothers. The only relaxation of this attitude occurs with
607 her sisters-in-law (*pɔŋakie*, pl. *pɔŋakies*). With them, often her equals in years and her companions in work, she can laugh and play and joke. Like herself, they are already, or are fated to be, married out of their natal families to 'strangers'. This is a bond of fellowship superadded to that of sex and often age. But they also belong to the opposite camp. Identifying themselves with their brothers and their lineage, they sometimes speak of her as 'our wife (*ti pɔŋa*)', and she sometimes refers to them as 'my husbands (*n-strib*)'. They will take the side of their brother if she comes into conflict with her husband or deserts him. Her relationship with them is typical of the ambivalence that underlies the joking relationship among the Tallensi.

601 In the first year or so of marriage a woman tries to avoid having to
●576 address her male in-laws and her husband directly in public. If they address her it will be in a somewhat formal and courteous way, her husband and his brothers using her clan name, her father-in-law addressing her as 'mother (*ma*)'. She is most at home—but in a very deferential manner—with her mother-in-law, in whose rooms and under whose care she lives, whose domestic duties she largely takes over, and who also addresses her as 'mother (*ma*)'. To any member of the family she speaks of her father-in-law as 'father (*ba*)' and of her mother-in-law as 'mother (*ma*)', and she addresses the latter by this term. Outside the family a woman speaks of her husband as 'my husband (*n-sɛt*)'; of his brothers as 'my older' or 'my younger husband (*n-sɛt-bier*, or *n-sɛt-pit*)'; and of his parents as 'my father (mother)-in-law (*n-daŋaamdoog*, masc.—*n daŋaampɔk*, fem.)'. Her husband speaks of her as 'my wife (*mpɔŋa*)'; his brothers as 'my older or younger brother's wife (*m-bier* or *m-pit pɔŋa*)', or in some situations as 'our (i.e. the lineage's) wife'; her parents-in-law as *sampɔŋa*.

606 The status of a woman in her conjugal family is most sharply focused in her relations with her parents-in-law. For it is they who form the axis around which the family revolves. Its unity, its independence, the management of its material affairs, and the maintenance of its well-being all reside in them. Though the general impression one receives of a woman's relationship with her parents-in-law is one of affability and ease, it is potentially anomalous, particularly in the early years. As their son's wife she is in the position of a daughter to them. She will give valuable and indispensable service in the economy of the household. She will produce children to augment the family and the lineage. But, as she herself knows and feels, she is an intruder. She is made to feel this in the early years of marriage even if, as so often happens, she belongs to an adjacent clan, and was personally well known to her conjugal family before marriage. For marriage creates entirely new associations between individuals and families. If she was married by elopement she knows that she is on trial, perhaps the object of a

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that prenuptial love affairs between adolescents have diminished since the coming of the white man, owing to increasing scarcity of marriageable girls and the consequent decline in the age of marriage for them. Premarital motherhood, on the other hand, they regard with a certain amount of scorn. It suggests a weakness of character, but it is not so disgraceful as to spoil the girl's chances of marriage.

The norms of kinship and marriage indirectly lead to prenuptial love affairs and adultery occurring mostly between distantly related members of the same clan. Such amours, whether casual or lasting, are not considered to be incestuous. That the parties are members of the same clan does not arouse public disapprobation, nor does it bring down ritual penalties on their heads or set jural sanctions in motion against them. This makes it seem the more inappropriate to pick out the sexual tie as the corner-stone of marriage. For, as we have previously indicated, the social relations of affinity arising out of marriage are always sharply contrasted with those of kinship; and if sex relations are the essential thing in marriage they must surely be incompatible with kinship. The paradox is resolved if we take into account certain principles of kinship that will be elucidated later. It is of interest here as evidence of the distinction, characteristic of Tale ideas about sex, which the natives draw clearly between sexual relations as a mode of sensual gratification and sexual intercourse in marriage.

Tallensi often cite the maxim 'Copulation and marriage are not the same thing (*Pɛn nyɛbɔg ni pɔŋadir, ba ka bu kɔ'la*)'. But they also say, 'We marry for the sake of copulation'; always adding, however, 'and for the sake of children'. The sexual motive, in short, is considered to be fundamental to marriage, both for men and for women; but it is fundamental as the means to the supreme end of marriage, the procreation of children.

The Economic and Property Relations of Spouses

The significance of sex in marriage will be clearer if we consider first the economic and property relations of husband and wife. By marriage a woman is transferred from her father's authority to that of her husband, and, consequently, to that of anyone under whose authority he comes. Explaining this, Tallensi say, 'A man owns (*so*) his wife. Has he not bought (*da*) her?' This does not mean that a wife is regarded as a chattel. In fact no man would dare to say in his wife's presence that he bought her, except in jest, in an outburst of violent anger, or deliberately to insult her. The concept 'own' here means that a man has authority over and is responsible for his wife. He 'owns' her working power, in the first place. She must perform the indispensable domestic tasks connected with the preparation of food for the household, the provision of water-supplies, the care of the home and of the children, and so forth. She must help him with the sowing and the harvesting of his crops,

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will between parents-in-law and son-in-law. They visit one another regularly, help one another more than the strict letter of custom requires, and are proud of one another. In particular, this positive element in the relationship of affines becomes attached to the brother-in-law (*dakii*), and it is not uncommon for brothers-in-law to be real friends if they live near one another, or belong to allied clans, and if there are no bride-price debts outstanding. In former days a man would protect an affine belonging to another clan from molestation by his own clansmen, in the same way as he protected a kinsman of another clan. I have seen men show deep grief at the death of a parent-in-law or brother-in-law.

On the other hand, the sense of an underlying divergence or even conflict of interests that is so conspicuous in the early stages of a marriage never wholly vanishes. The intercourse of affines always tends to be coloured by the feeling that they might be at strife at any time. This is what makes *deen*, affinity, the arch symbol of all that is most antithetical to *dɔŋam*, consanguinity. A formal distance must be maintained between affines; and the passage of time merely blurs but never obliterates this.

A man must show formal deference to his parents-in-law or their representatives, especially in the early years of marriage, and always in ceremonial situations. When he encounters them, or visits them, he sits down to greet them in the posture of respect—crossed legs (*pɔt nɔba*), bowed and hatless head—adopted before a chief, a high ritual functionary, or an ancestor shrine. He is a 'stranger' in their house and they in his house. He is 'shy' of them, and must be on his best behaviour in their presence. It would be most unmannerly, almost immodest, for father-in-law and son-in-law to eat together. In certain circumstances this attitude is extended to the whole settlement of a father-in-law's clan. For example, one rarely sees a respectable Tongo elder eating bought porridge publicly in the market at Ba'ari or Sii. Partly it is unbecoming for the head of a family, as people might gossip, saying that he had no food at home. But the main reason is that Tongo people marry men and women from Sii and Ba'ari. A Tongo man thinks of these places as the homes of possible or actual affines, and he would feel very ill at ease eating bought porridge publicly in the presence of an affine. When a man's parents-in-law or their representatives come on a visit to his house, he must show them honour (*giem ba*). The officious hospitality showered on a visiting father- or mother-in-law, or anybody representing them, by a son-in-law, and vice versa, makes a totally different impression from the friendly welcome offered to a kinsman from another settlement.

Affines have no axiomatic ties. Their relationship rests on a well-defined jural compact. Their parallel interests in the woman who links them, and in her children, are clearly differentiated. This means that a son-in-law has to make special efforts to keep the goodwill of his

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and adds prestige to the occasion, to the widows, to the old women tending the corpse, and to the girls dancing extravagantly in honour of the dead.[1]

A son-in-law should help to dig the grave and to carry the corpse to the grave, or depute a clansman to do these tasks on his behalf. These duties are undertaken readily and with pride, as a rule, whether or not a man has been on good terms with his deceased parent-in-law, though there are no sanctions for enforcing them. Men perform them as a mark of respect to their affines, both to the dead and the living, and it would be a serious affront, causing friction with his living in-laws and deep resentment on the part of his wife, if they were neglected. In addition, there is the incentive of personal satisfaction, for they give a grand opportunity for self-display. The mourning party he brings, his largesse, and the conspicuous assistance he gives at the burial, are all means of showing off his personal importance and his excellence as a son-in-law.

A son-in-law is obliged also to send certain food contributions of prescribed kind and quantity to the funeral of a parent-in-law. Small contributions accompany the mourning party. The principal contribution is due on 'the day of sleeping at the funeral (*kogbedaar*)'. This consists of a sheep or goat cut up and ready cooked, together with a large basket of slabs of porridge and a pot of relish. Unlike the duties previously mentioned, these food contributions are 'debts' (*samər*, pl. *sama*)—i.e. obligatory gifts. If a man cannot pay any of them when they are due, he must do so whenever he is able to; and if he omits to do so altogether before his death, his son will have to settle the debt. For here a sanction that operates in many social and religious obligations of the Tallensi comes into play. If a man dies without paying a ceremonial debt of this kind, then, in accordance with the principle of equivalent returns, he must be done by likewise. *His* son cannot accept the same food contribution from *his* son-in-law until the debt is paid; and this is felt as an affront to his spirit. His son would therefore take steps immediately to set the matter right. In fact it appears to be very rare in normal circumstances, for a man to omit these duties altogether during his lifetime.

Conversely, if a man's daughter or his son-in-law dies, he in turn sends a mourning party to represent him and convey his condolences. He is also obliged to send certain customary food gifts. But these are small in quantity; for though they represent a return in kind for what is due from a son-in-law in like circumstances, they are made by a superior to an inferior, by one who has already conferred a benefit that can never be

[1] The currency chiefly used on such occasions consists of cowrie shells (*layapielsb*, pl. *layapiela*, lit. white money, the original form *layah*, pl. *ligəri*, being nowadays restricted to British currency), now worth only a hundred a penny. A man can be generous for a shilling, and prodigal for half a crown.

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606 It is base to seduce an affine's wife, or the wife of his near clansman, anywhere, but it is abominable to do it at the injured man's own house. Strictly speaking, 'polluting the room' refers to the seduction of a father-in-law's wife, or the wife of his close agnate, at his house or in his settlement. If a man's father-in-law or one of the latter's close agnates seduces the son-in-law's wife (of another clan than theirs), or the wife of one of his close agnates, it is generally treated as a particularly reprehensible form of adultery. The son-in-law would not, for example, necessarily divorce his wife on that account. A ritual reconciliation will be made and the matter closed. Tallensi say such offences are extremely rare, and I have never heard of a case.

835 The offence borders on a sin if it is committed by a son-in-law or someone genealogically identified with him, on the one hand because of his quasi-filial relationship with his father-in-law through his wife, and on the other because of the sex barrier between affines. The striking thing is that it is a particularly heinous case of 'polluting the room' of a father-in-law for the son-in-law to have sexual relations with his own wife at her father's house. The bond which most closely unites a married couple is the relationship that cuts the woman off most completely from her filial relationship with her paternal family. As we have noted before, if her husband has sexual relations with her in her father's house her status as wife and mother is confounded with her status as sister and daughter; her husband's status as son-in-law is confounded with his status as father and husband in his own family. If the husband did not abrogate his marital rights at his wife's father's house, an insoluble conflict would arise both on the jural level and in their emotional relations. So strict is this taboo that it extends to any man of the son-in-law's lineage, and any daughter of the father-in-law's lineage, more particularly within the limits of the medial lineage. A man may not even meet his wife face to face on the path leading from her parental home to his, if she is on her way from her parents' house to her husband's; for this would symbolize a wish to treat her as his wife at her father's house.

783 An accidental breach of this symbolic taboo can be mended, though not without difficulty, by a ritual reconciliation. A breach of the prohibition against sexual relations between husband and wife at the latter's paternal home (and *yir*, home, in this context includes the whole settlement), or the equivalent offence committed by a close agnate of the husband, is irreparable. The marriage must be broken up, and children borne of it may be taken away by the woman's father. If this is not done, disaster would fall on everybody concerned. The bride-price is forfeited by the offending husband.

584 Opportunities and temptations to break these taboos often occur, for instance when a young man takes a party of his clansmen to spend a few days with his father-in-law in order to help him with some work. A man's wife generally accompanies him on such occasions. The visitors

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Parents and Children in Everyday Intercourse

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576 One of the most interesting things about the relations of parents and children among the Tallensi is their conduct to one another in the intercourse of everyday life. It brings out, incidentally, the distinction always clearly made between own parents and proxy parents. There is a familiarity, almost a camaraderie, between parent and child that makes the observer wonder how the authority of the parent can be as effective, and the respect and obedience of the child as sincere as the evidence of custom and belief show them to be. In this matter the Tallensi resemble us more closely than they do some other primitive peoples. It is most striking in the case of the father. From babyhood up, Tallensi address their father, both own father and classificatory father, by his name. The term *ba* (pl. *banam*), father, is used to refer to one's father or classificatory father but never in addressing him, while he is alive. After his death it is often used in addressing him in prayer as an expression of reverence. It is also used as a term of respect when addressing someone from whom one is begging a favour, or to show particular deference or courtesy, chiefly to old men. A passer-by greeting an old man not closely related to him or her, or a person of rank such as a chief's brother, addresses him as father; a person asking a small boy not closely related to him or her, for a drink, says, 'Bring me the water, oh my father'; a man who has come to intercede with a friend on behalf of the friend's son pleads, 'Desist, oh my father, desist'. Similarly, parents speak of a child as *m-bii*, 'my child', of a son as *n-dawoo* (pl. *dawoos*), 'my son', of a daughter as *m-poyawoo* (pl. *poyawoos*), 'my daughter', but always address a child by name.

With this mode of address goes great freedom of speech and behaviour towards a father, particularly one's own father. If children are asked about their attitudes to their parents they always say that they do not 'fear' (*zo*—in the sense of 'to stand in awe of') their own father as much as they 'fear' their father's older brother. Children will speak directly to their father, argue with him, contradict him politely, if necessary, laugh with him. No topic of conversation is tabooed or barred by etiquette.[1] No one can tell from the behaviour to each other in ordinary intercourse of a man and his adult son or married daughter that they are parent and child. In fact, the greater the apparent comradeship of a young adult with an old man, the more likely is it that they are own father and child.

One's mother, on the other hand, is never addressed by name but always as '*ma*, mother'; but a mother's co-wife is commonly addressed by the name used for her by her in-laws. There is also more restraint in the manner in which a person speaks to his mother than in his manner

[864] [1] Sex matters, for instance, are freely discussed between parents and adult children, subject only to the rules of polite conversation.

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of speaking to his father. A boy might order his mother about when the family is out harvesting, for instance, and a girl might argue with her mother as spontaneously as if she were an equal. But the underlying attitude of deference can always be detected.

This undertone of deference is also present in intercourse with the father, only less obviously than in relation to the mother. For instance, if a child is some distance away and its father or mother wants to call it, he or she will shout the child's name. But if a child, even when grown up, wishes to call a parent he will go up to him or her. A boy or a man will borrow his brother's cloth without asking permission. He will not take anything belonging to his father without permission. If two brothers or sisters or a sister and brother are eating together either will start first and both may be dipping their hands into the dish of porridge at the same time. If a child is eating with his parent he will wait for his parent to begin first and to tell him to eat, and will wait for his parent to finish and leave the dish to be 'cleaned out (*veeh*)' by him. In particular, the familiarity between parents and children never goes so far as mutual teasing, as in a joking relationship. If a native is asked about this he frowns and says that it would be most offensive for a son or daughter to tease or joke with (*kooh*) a parent or vice versa. You cannot tease or joke with your parent or your child, the Tallensi say, because you do so with your grandparent or grandchild. We shall return to this presently.

We see, again, that there is an apparent paradox in the relations of Tale parents and children. The natives cannot explain it and are puzzled if they are asked for explanations. But if we take into account the whole complex of parent–child relations an interpretation is possible. What we meet again is that ever-recurring principle of Tale social organization, the conjunction of polar forces, the synthesis of tendencies that work in opposite directions. The sense of continuity between the generations, which is so strong among the Tallensi, has to be reconciled with the sense of divergence due to differences of generation and of interests between them, if the relations of parents and children are to run smoothly. In terms of sentiments and attitudes the authority parents have over their children must be reconciled with their love for them; and children must be able to show respect for their parents, to bow to their control, without ceasing to love them and without foregoing their own independence. Children are the fulfilment of their parents' life—and at the same time felt to be in some way their parents' rivals. Parents suffer and spend themselves to give life to their child. They provide for him and fix his place in society. But he can never escape from their constraint. In all their relations with each other parents and children have to cope with actually or potentially conflicting motives and sentiments as well as with the pull and pressure of divergent social forces.

The familiarity and friendliness between parents and children in their everyday relations is one of the means by which these diverse

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593 tendencies are reconciled. The liberty to address his father by name is a reassurance, to the child, of the love and solicitude that lie behind the
●576 authority his father exercises over him. Perhaps it is also an expression of the identification of father and child by the lineage principle. And the greater deference in his behaviour towards his mother than towards his father is a sign that he recognizes her control, though she seems to have only love and devotion for him. Familiarity in everyday intercourse compensates for the filial piety due to a parent in the more formal, particularly in the jural and ritual aspects, of parent–child relations. The greater overt freedom with the father compensates for the greater emphasis on respect and dependence in the child's relations with him; the franker signs of deference towards the mother compensate for the greater emphasis on her love for her child as against her authority over him.

Clearly there is a very high degree of consistency between the social
593 images of the parents projected in the cultural norms of the Tallensi and the actual behaviour of children to parents. The mother is thought of as the food-giver. Her love for her children is subject to no limits or laws and her status in relation to them is almost sacrosanct. Her relations with them are based on love tempered with authority. The father is thought of as the source of discipline, the guardian of good conduct. He is strict without being harsh or tyrannous. His role is of special importance in the face of the community at large and in relation to the spiritual powers that govern human life. His relations with his children are based on his authority over them, his responsibility for them, and justice tempered with love.

Adolescence and the Principle of Reciprocity

For a Tale boy the years between about 13 and 20 bring changes in
883 degree rather than in kind in his relations with his parents. There is no affective or social break to mark a transition from childhood to adulthood among the Tallensi. Even among the Hill Talis initiation into the cult of the External *Bɔyar* is not associated with adolescence; it can take place at any age. A boy's social development is a process of gradual advance along lines laid down in early childhood.[1] As he grows older

[1] Tallensi distinguish the main phases of a boy's development not by
856 chronological age but by two criteria of a broader character, either separately or together, according to the situation. They have a physiological criterion and an economic one. Physiologically they distinguish three major phases, after babyhood, in a boy: (*a*) when he is still a 'small boy (*bumbil*)' with undescended testicles, showing, as they put it, only a 'pale scrotum (*lanzee*)'; (*b*) Pubescence, denoted by the verb *sol*, to mature physically, and marked by the testicles descending (*lana sigərəme*) and the emergence of pubic hair (*saŋkperuŋ kɔbət*). They say 'he has matured completely (*u sol ba'ahme*)' of a boy who has reached puberty and is entering manhood. (*c*) Lastly comes adulthood, when he is a 'grown man (*bonkɔrəg*)'. It is by reference to these physiological phases that men often date events in their life. The second criterion is that of advancing economic proficiency. A 'small boy' is capable only of scaring the birds from the newly

4: Fortes and Fortes E-5 (1934-1936) 1936
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initiative in this matter is never taken by the woman herself. If she has no meat she cooks without it, but the husband, tasting the soup, will observe that her meat is finished and will catch a guinea-fowl for her or give her money to buy one at the market. A woman may not catch one of her husband's guinea-fowls herself or she would be branded a thief, but she could catch one of her own, if she has any. This is the reason why she tells her husband 'So-and-so gave me a guinea-fowl and I had it killed to-day', if she slaughters one she received as a gift. A woman never kills or plucks a guinea-fowl herself because it is unbecoming. She will ask a young boy in the compound to do it for her. We have frequently observed women carrying home live guinea-fowls already plucked for them in the market by some man, so as to avoid delay in the cooking. The freshly killed guinea-fowl is hung up directly over the fireplace where it becomes graduaily dried. When it is used the first day it is called *num-mahar*, i.e. fresh meat; after two or three days it is dry on the surface but still soft inside and is known as *num-gahar* or *num-zzra*, i.e. smoked meat; after three days it is dry all through. It is now *num-kpee*, dried meat. There is no preference shown for meat at any particular stage; the Tallensi are an economical people and have a matter-of-fact attitude in this regard. Meat is added to the soup in very small quantities. Used fresh or smoked, it is added as a whole portion, e.g. the head, the neck, a wing, a leg or the breast. Dried meat is ground and stirred into the soup in the same way as the other seasonings. A medium sized guinea-fowl thus lasts a family of seven about a week. Dried meat can be kept any length of time, and if a piece of fresh meat is obtained in the meantime it is used up first. In such a case one guinea-fowl might last a housewife as much as a fortnight.

Beef or donkey-meat is much appreciated. We have seen a woman produce about two square inches of dried beef which was a year old. Such meat is carefully preserved in a pot or calabash among a woman's more valued possessions; but dried guinea-fowl is kept with her other soup ingredients in the kitchen.

Fish is used in the same way as meat, though less frequently, and mainly in dried form. This is due to the fact that it is seasonal and has generally to be purchased. But it is appreciated as much as meat.

Vegetables are the foundation of every soup; meat and fish make

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own efforts in time of scarcity. Each woman cares for her own children only. She keeps food for an absent child, but will offer some to a co-wife's child only if it asks her for it. But the man will give food to all his children. As a rule, he eats the portion sent in by his senior wife and tastes a little from each dish brought in by the others. When he has had his fill he calls his children to come and eat the rest, always remembering those who have not had enough. Thus the discrepancy in the distribution of grain, where each woman gets the same share irrespective of the number of mouths she has to feed, is adjusted by the man in his fair re-distribution of the cooked food.

This general pattern is not a rigid one, but is adapted to the structure of every household and to its special circumstances, e.g. a man would eat with his wife and small children from a common dish if they happened to be alone in the compound. To do so if another wife were present would cause envy and quarrelling between the women; these arrangements are a matter of etiquette and not of taboo.

The natives account for the custom of a man's eating with his 'youngest' child on the grounds that a child must eat properly in order to grow and must be taught to do so. They say, also, that it thus learns to know its father, and not only its mother whom it is always following about. We have not sufficient material to judge the validity of this interpretation; it is quoted here to indicate the native valuation of the sharing of food in the family.

Infants are given morsels of porridge as soon as they can swallow solid food, and by the age of 18 months can feed themselves dexterously. They are weaned by the age of three not by a forcible or harsh separation from the breast, but by gradual habituation to adult food. The emphasis on the adequate feeding of children is shown, also, in the manner in which *sayaksɔt*, left-over porridge, is reserved for them. Porridge remaining after the noon meal is stirred into the porridge cooked at sunset; if it is left after the evening meal it is given to children cold for breakfast next day. Only after they have eaten their fill will adults have some. In the months of plenty children often have a morning meal of *sayaksɔt*; at other times a handful of ground-nuts, or a dish of flour-water or of dawa-dawa powder must suffice.

Flour-water (*zuukuun*) deserves a note to itself. There are two ways

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828 situation everybody takes it for granted that any person participating either already knows, or wants to know, how to behave in a manner appropriate to the situation and in accordance with his level of maturity. An effort to learn is thus evoked as an adaptation to the demands of a real situation. It is not that people expect one another [183 to act with automatic and machine-like precision; for in point of fact 876] Tale culture tolerates considerable elasticity in the patterns of behaviour. We have an analogy in our own culture in the expectation entertained by most adults that little girls want to play with dolls and little boys with toy engines. We act on this expectation whenever we buy presents for children. How exactly this influences the play of Western children has not been investigated, but there can be little doubt that it does. We expect children to know how to play without being taught.

863 In contrast to this, many Western mothers nowadays do not expect their children to acquire clean habits simply in the normal course of development, and therefore set out to train them deliberately from earliest infancy in these habits. Tale mothers never train their children deliberately to be clean. When they reach the stage of walking and talking easily, children are expected not to defecate indoors in the daytime but to be asked to be taken outside or to run out themselves. A lapse meets with an expression of disapproval and a reprimand: 'You are big enough already. Can't you go outside to defecate?' 868 The child learns in response to the expectation that it is capable of 198 normal behaviour in that respect.[1] Similarly, infants are expected to

[1] The example is intended to illustrate how the expectation of normal behaviour acts but, of course, other factors are also involved in the Tale child's acquisition of clean habits. These habits are learnt gradually, not all at once. Before it can walk or talk, its mother or an older child sometimes takes it outside when it shows signs of wishing to defecate. By the time it is expected to be clean it is being drawn into the play-activities of slightly older children, most of which take place out of doors. The need to adapt itself to the habits and standards of its older playmates is a strong stimulus to the child to learn not only bowel and bladder control but also the rules [576 of etiquette. As the Tallensi have no special sanitary arrangements, but excrete 514] in the open anywhere near the homestead, taking care only to keep a little way from the paths and from any people who may be about, it is easy for a child to learn the adult convention from the example of older children and adults. Clean habits, like other skills, are learnt as organic responses (see below, p. 10). I shall refer to this matter again, in another context, in a later section.

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Like ourselves, the Tallensi recognize that some observances are merely matters of convention, others are matters of conscience, and a great many have elements of both. Their emphasis, however, differs conspicuously from ours. For example, the notion of cruelty to animals as delinquent or reprehensible would never occur to them. Small boys often catch mice or birds and keep them, tied with a strip of strong grass, to play with for days and eventually kill and eat them. It is, indeed, a crude form of nature study, for they learn a great deal about the habits, the anatomy, and physiology of the animals and birds they ostensibly maltreat in this way. They are never checked, and the suggestion that this was bad (the Tallensi have no expression, as far as I am aware, for our notion of cruelty) was received with amused laughter. It is a natural interest of children and not a moral problem; and it does not produce a general attitude of cruelty to animals. Both children and adults often show great affection for domestic dogs, for example.

Many rules of conduct are observed 'because it is befitting' (*de naʀəmi*)—or because non-conformity is 'unbecoming' (*de pu naʀəmi*)—i.e. it rouses embarrassment or ridicule or public criticism. Thus when greeting a superior, a man must sit with legs flat, crossed at the calves, bare-headed, eyes lowered, whereas a woman must crouch on all fours or sit with thighs close together and legs tucked under the buttocks. This latter posture in women is a matter of modesty. Up to about 9 or 10 years of age a little girl can sit in any way, legs spread out if she wishes, although from babyhood she has learnt to sit with legs tucked under. As she approaches puberty she will often be admonished 'sit properly' if she does not sit decorously. It is unbecoming for women to eat the domestic fowl, and I have often heard little girls of 9 or 10 boast that they are already refraining from it. A woman goes naked until she is advanced in her first pregnancy.

eyeing me from the security of his mother's lap, was heard to say that he was afraid I might cut off his penis. The Tale infant, in short, appears to be permitted to gratify all its wish impulses without restraint; yet it must do so in a social world over which it has no control, in which it is a weak dependant. Here, I think, still speaking in terms of superficial psychology, is the germ of the later domination of respect for authority in the child's moral development. It seems probable, from these observations, that the deeper psychology of the process is not unlike that which has been recorded by students of our own children, such as Dr. S. Isaacs.